



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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full of the love of music, and can so infect him with that love that he will cheerfully submit to the drudgery of hard work, without which no art can be mastered. So we cannot make for our children any royal road to the kingdom of God. We cannot abridge for them the pains, the toil, the self-sacrifice, with which the art of the divine life must be sought; we must not try to abridge them. But if our own hearts are full of the love of that kingdom, we can with God's help infect our children with it, and thus teach them to count all toil and effort light for the prize that is set before them. Love is born of love; the end of religious education is love, and the means is love. But love in its very essence implies self-sacrifice; it scorns delight, and lives laborious days; and to this discipline for love's sake we must inure our children. We must bring them up in an atmosphere of simplicity and service, and early train them to treat Pleasure as a servant, so that she may never become their mistress. And it is only by having the ideal ever before us, as the constant object of our prayers and purposes, that we can hope to plant their feet in the realm of reality.

Finally, if we wish to keep our children in the fellowship of the Christian Church, it is in our homes that we must teach them that spiritual idea of the worship and work of the Church, which will deliver them from regarding the "means of grace" as a means of self-pleasing. We must teach them that the spirit of worship is the spirit of sacrifice, and that each of us has to bring a victim to the altar before the fire of God can descend upon it. We must train them to understand that the Church lives not for herself, but that every individual congregation is part of the great army of God, deeply implicated in His battles everywhere, whether against national sins, such as intemperance, or against heathenism in our towns and villages, and in the great world outside. A large idea of the kingdom of God, a wide sympathy with its work, will help to keep them true to the cause of God when they have to tread that winepress of fermenting thought from which we neither can nor ought to hope to preserve them.

HOW TO GIVE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

BY MISS AGNES MASON.

I AM going to speak, to-day, of religious *instruction*, not of religious *influence*, which is what we are in ourselves; and not of *what* to teach, but of *how* to teach. This last limitation will, I think, keep us clear of the difficulties of Biblical criticism.

In giving religious instruction to children up to the age of twelve years, three conditions are necessary, if the teaching is to be of any permanent value.

It must be interesting, definite, and spiritual.

The Jesuits, who are such good teachers, recognise in their schools the difficulty and importance of teaching very young children; and it is said that their teachers are promoted downwards, that the least experienced master is given an advanced and disciplined class, and when he is able to manage and instruct it, he is promoted to a class where the children are less orderly and advanced, and so on downwards until he is at the top of his profession, teaching the youngest class. And they say, I believe, that if they can have a child to teach till he is seven years old, they do not care who has him afterwards, for all the most important lasting work is done.

But if we recognise that it is difficult to teach little children, we are on the way to success.

All of us have not, of course, a "gift for teaching," which is as real a thing as a "gift for preaching." But any one who tries in the right way can become a fairly successful teacher. Though no rules for teaching can be given, yet it does help us when we grasp and apply true principles of teaching; and those who can make the history of the Greeks and Romans a delight to their children can, if they try, make the history of the Jews equally attractive. But let us consider our first principle.

(1) Teaching must be interesting.

We shall not find it so hard to fulfil if we remember that a child is inferior to a full-grown man, not so much in intelligence as in

knowledge; and when we impart knowledge to him, we must proceed from inside his mind, linking on our instruction to what he already knows and takes an interest in. He will then be interested by it, and will understand it as a natural sequence to what he has learnt before. This is one reason why our Lord taught His disciples by parables. He led them on, and so should we lead our children to apprehend the unknown through the known.

An ideal lesson is a work of art, and, like all works of art, it must have unity in variety; but how can we who are not artists make it interesting? Certainly in our teaching there should be no flippancy nor puerilities. We may take comfort in thinking that if we teach on right principles we shall really make the lesson interesting; for definiteness will give it variety, and spirituality will give it unity.

(2) Teaching must be definite.

We should always be definite in telling a story. A child is so anxious to hear every detail—they are so interesting to him that he remembers them. A pin must have something to pull against if it is to stick; and details give his mind something to pull against. Details also have a value of their own as facts; and they cultivate in a child the habit of accuracy.

In teaching right matter we inevitably gain right manner! In doctrine the same principle holds good. We must teach positive details so far as we can. For instance, in the story of the Creation, if we teach that "God created the world out of nothing," the child's mind is left a blank. But if we can teach that God created it out of His thoughts, and because He is Love eternally "before the world was made," and show how love is always going out of itself, the strongest creative power that we know, that is akin to something that the child knows; he can understand something of it; a little teaching is definite and is remembered.

Thirty years ago the importance of laying stress on definite teaching was not so great. Rather the contrary; there was too little tolerance and allowance made for other people's views. But in these days we are afraid to trust what we do know, for fear of what we do not know; we are terrified and oppressed by the thought that others think differently from ourselves.

The difficulty now is to train children to face this current when they are older. We want to make them feel the value of

positive knowledge, of belief in truth, whether what *I* am teaching is true or not.

But what if we are indefinite ourselves?

To some minds, certainly, dogma *is* nonsense.

But humility is not wasted on children, and we may legitimately teach as true a doctrine which has come down to us from of old, permanently commending itself to the Christian conscience, though saying frankly, "I do not understand it myself." So I hope we should teach, not only in religion, but in every other matter. This, though it may be called a teaching of dogma, yet is by no means a dogmatic method, and we do not deprive the child of his belief in truth, and allow our teaching to consist of generalities about "being good," and "all good children going to heaven," which leads to nothing. The question of authority is in no way peculiar to religion, and will confront the child in every region of knowledge.

And we must never be shocked at a child's questions; many children have an inner life carefully hidden, and a question may be the child's attempt to let light into the secret.

(3) Religious instruction must be spiritual.

We should draw out of the details the true generalities—spiritual truths—that is to say, eternal practical relations.

For instance, the writers of the Old Testament are continually saying, "God did" this and that, sometimes without further explanation; sometimes saying how, sometimes saying also that a man did it. That is to say, God is present to the whole of their history. There are not "special providences," but not a sparrow falls to the ground without God. So it is now. And the chief value of teaching Old Testament history seems to me to consist in bringing out this eternal practical fact.

But if we are doubtful how to teach any part of the Bible, we need not begin by teaching that particular part. We should teach children of three or four what is suited to their age, and go on to teach them what is suited to children of six or seven, and so on. We need never be at a loss for something to teach when we have all the Bible to choose from; and although all the Bible is valuable, just as every star has its own glory, yet none of us would count it all of equal value, chapter for chapter. There are some parts, we need not hesitate to admit, which, for various reasons, cannot be profitably taught to children.

The New Testament stands on rather a different footing. We

might believe in Providence, even if we knew nothing of the Old Testament. But in the New Testament the fact is history, and is only the other side of the spiritual relation.

Indeed, the second part of the Creed is nothing but a recitation of historical facts about Jesus Christ; and it would be impossible to leave them out, and yet to teach a child that he was a member of Christ, a spiritual truth which is certainly eternal and practical. We teach a child that he is a member of such a family, and these relations have a practical value. They are what a child is, and we expect what he does to follow from them. So with that greater relation. The child is a member of Christ, and what he does should follow in just the same matter-of-fact, practical way. Only this is a far deeper relation, touching not only a part of the child's self, but the whole—it is eternal.

We ought never, I think, to teach a Bible story without bringing out the spiritual truth which it teaches, not necessarily putting the moral in words in cut-and-dry fashion, but letting the child feel it, which we can only do by really having it present to our own minds. And we ought never to teach a doctrine, an eternal truth, without likewise showing its practical side. Each story or doctrine otherwise taught has done the child not good, but harm, teaching half-truths, so that they are no better than falsehoods. And I think that we should be less afraid of teaching definite spiritual truth, if we remembered that all theology is nothing but an expansion of the text, "God is Love."

THE FÉSOLE CLUB PAPERS.

By W. G. COLLINGWOOD.

XIII.

THE LIFE SCHOOL.

WE are now in the third year of the Fésole Club. All this while we have been learning how to draw and paint. We have begun at the beginning, with the simplest methods of art, and laid foundations as firm, we hope, as those walls built into, and upon, the living rock of the ancient city, from which we derive the name of our society, and the rules of its work. It is time that we should ask ourselves, "What are we going to draw, now that we have learned?"

Pictures, of course! Ah, young friends and fellow-students, the people whose pictures are worth drawing, begin early and work late, every day, and all day, year after year; striving; struggling; laying down their lives for their labour; and are heaven-born artists to begin with. You may indeed be such; but if so, go to one of the great schools, and take up the profession in a business-like way. The Fésole Club is not for you; it is only a little quiet corner, into which a few old-fashioned folk have withdrawn, retainers of an exiled leader, with some young people whose country lives keep them out of the busy world of the studios. In this our Arden, exempt from public ambitions and modern aims, we have found sermons in stones, unashamed: and we ask not to be famous painters, but only humble lovers of Art, glad if we may recognise her, when we see her flitting, Diana-like, through the twilight, among mysteries of life that without her light are unseen and unregarded.

Not to make fine pictures, nor to amuse ourselves idly and irresponsibly; but to use our drawing as a means of education; that is what, I think, we should desire, and may expect. The sister art of Writing, how do we use it to educational advantage?